Faith that Sees Through Culture

Lesson 7: When are we?

# Getting going

1. What is your standard answer to the question, “how is it going? What are you up to?” right now?
2. Why do you think everyone’s time is so crazy right now?
3. What has God been saying to you in his Word?

# Getting into the Word

1. So far we’ve considered the following

Seeing through External Evil

Seeing through Internal Evil

Seeing to reality

Who am I: Sinner and saint

Who are they: Exclusive and inclusive

Where are we: Two Kingdoms

When are we: Time

1. This is some of what the Bible says about the past, present and future. How does God want us to think about each time? Is there a time he wants us to prioritize?

Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

**Past**

Psalm 143:5 “I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done”

Isaiah 43:18 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.”

Isaiah 46:9 “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.”

Luke 9:62 “62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 “17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

**Present**

Psalm 118:24 “24 The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.”

Luke 4:21 “21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 23:43 “43 Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Ephesians 5:15-16 “15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”

Philippians 1:23-26 “23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.”

Hebrews 3:13-15 “13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. 15 As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.””

**Future**

Isaiah 65:17 ““See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”

Matthew 6:34 “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Philippians 3:14 “Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 “13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”

1. In your mind, how does what the Bible says about time compare with the main beliefs of our world today about time?
2. Espinosa (the author of the study) argues, “*The focus here is on the present day.* We become wise when the present day is for us the most important day. It is the day given us to live in faith, hope, and love; it is a new day and opportunity to turn from sin and turn toward Christ. It is the day that testifies that God still has something for us to do on earth, whether we are to be as Christ as the one serving, or to be as Christ in being served, or both. Living in faith, the present day is a day for “fruitful labor”. With this backdrop of *today as the priority in time.*..Because of sin though, Christians lose track of the priority of the present. Instead, we either slide into the past and potentially get stuck in it, or we get ahead of ourselves and start worrying about the future.” (pg 189-190) He argues that the present is the priority. What do you think of his argument? Do you agree?
3. What is the value of the past for Christians?
4. What is the value of the future for Christians?
5. A lot of people say to me, “pastor, the world is just so awful. I’m ready to get out of it.” Or “pastor, I think the world is getting near the end”. Or “how can there be so much evil in the world?” Can Christians say things like these and still prioritize the present time?
6. Another way to approach this issue is the Lord’s Prayer. In the Lord’s Prayer we say, “Thy kingdom come.” We often explain that saying, “The kingdom of God comes with our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also. How is this done? When our heavenly Father gives us the Holy Spirit, so that by his grace believe his Word and lead a godly life here in time and there in eternity.” Admittedly, some people explain “thy kingdom come” means, “we are to pray that God will hasten Christ's return to establish the literal Kingdom of God on this earth (Revelation 11:15; Matthew 6:33). (<https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-questions-and-answers/why-did-jesus-christ-tell-us-to-pray-thy-kingdom-come)>

This is a good chance to practice reading one verse of the Bible in light of the rest of the Bible. Each explanation emphasizes a different time. Which time period is emphasized? Are the explanations exclusive? In light of the rest of the Bible, how should we pray “Thy kingdom come”?

1. A popular illustration for the Christian view of time is something like this. “Students of World War 2 have often remarked that although VE-Day was not until May 8, 1945, in a very real sense the war in Europe was over on June 6, 1944 — D-Day. In “Operation Overlord” some 1,000 ships — the largest armada ever to set sail — carried some 200,000 soldiers across the English Chanel to France where they stormed the coasts of Normandy. It was only the beginning of a military buildup that Germany could never have stopped. Anyone watching objectively knew that it was not only a matter of time — not if, but when. The amassing of such military personnel and materiel, the relentless crushing of German factories from American aircraft, the ever narrowing of Germany’s supply lines — all this declared that the difference between D-Day and VE-Day was just a matter of time. And for this reason many have said that it was on June 6, 1944, that the war was over.

I suspect, however, that this rather academic assessment of things differed greatly from the perspective of the soldiers on the ground. They were still dodging bullets and all manner of military force. They were bleeding and wounded, many were still dying, and there were still many harrowing days of the war yet to be endured, even some setbacks. It’s not that our soldiers in France were unaware of the significance of Normandy. I’m very sure they understood it well, and this understanding doubtless gave them great encouragement. But from the day-to-day experience of things, this war was still very much in full swing. The dangers were many — and they were everywhere.

Is this illustration accurate? What does it miss? Where does it fall short?

# Going forward in faith

1. What’s a passage from this Scripture that impacted you?
2. How are you going to respond to this message?
3. Who is one person you’d like to share this with?
4. Saying the present is the priority for Christians creates a whole bunch of problems. The most pressing is probably the Are we under the rule of the devil or the rule of God?

Matthew 28:18 “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”

John 18:36 “My kingdom is not of this world”

Ephesians 2:2 “2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”

2 Corinthians 4:4 “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”